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THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

ENDS AND MEANS IN ETHICAL THEORY

THE problem of values, as discussed by pragmatists in recent articles, has involved a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values, immediate and instrumental goods, or, in other words, between ends and means. This distinction, though important and objectively based, has not always been properly handled, and deserves more careful attention. I desire to examine the distinction in this article. My purpose is not to attack pragmatism, at least the realistic type of pragmatism which Professor Dewey has so forcefully expounded, but rather to point out a lack, an incompleteness, an unfortunate emphasis, in the pragmatic statement of the nature of value. While accepting the bulk of the pragmatic teachings, I feel quite dissatisfied with the situation in which I would, without further supplementation, find myself. This dissatisfaction, I believe, is in no way unique with me, but is wide-spread. Frequently, the dissatisfaction leads critics of pragmatism entirely to reject the positive doctrines which pragmatism has set forth, though the critics thus lose, it seems to me, more than they gain. The soundest criticism of current pragmatism will be to accept the truth it has discovered, and then to proceed to add more truth in the endeavor to provide a better balanced, a more complete theory of values.

I should like first of all to enumerate some of the teachings of pragmatism which seem to me true and important. Pragmatism, at least such as Professor Dewey has developed, has done well to remind us of the extent to which the solution of our social and political problems lies within our control. Men had almost forgotten that knowledge is power, absorbed, as they were, in the maze of logomachy of which modern philosophy so largely consists. We needed once more to recall vividly that intelligence, whatever more it may be, is an effective tool in action, that the substitution of enthusiasm for reason is suicidal, and that the attainment of excellence in any field is almost directly proportional to the degree of wisdom exercised. Pragmatism has put new force and virility into the old Socratic identification of knowledge and virtue. Again, pragmatism, as stated by Professor Dewey, has brought to light a new and pregnant truth, which consti-

tutes the most original contribution of pragmatism to moral theory, namely, that the situations in which men find themselves placed are often ambiguous, and call for action on the basis of experimental judgments, which, if successful, create goods which were not given as data of the situations out of which they were evolved. Often the goods available, the values potential in a situation, are genuinely uncertain. Not simply are the instrumental goods unknown, the tools which we must use if we would reach our chosen ends with expedition and skill; but also the intrinsic goods are genuinely in doubt, the goals towards which we would move, the ends which we desire to realize. In these cases we must create new and as yet unexperienced values through the guidance of conduct by "judgments of practise." Such ambiguous situations seem to abound to-day, as we hesitate between entrance into an international association of broad scope and withdrawal into comparative isolation, between retention of capitalistic control of industry and various suggested forms of "democratic" management, between alternative "proposed roads to freedom" which are offered by political party and social outcast. Furthermore, pragmatism has made central in the thought of contemporary philosophy the reality of time. Time has become once more, as it should be, a factor which we are bound to take into account in our efforts to understand human life. Every act has its consequences, reaching on into the future, perhaps for a brief period only and perhaps for long ages. The nature of time is inexorable, and decrees that nothing shall lie outside the sphere of causal interactions. No good can be sought simply because of its native excellence and without thought of what it will entail for the future; rather it makes a difference to that future, for better or for worse, and must be evaluated in the light of those consequences to which it leads as well as in the light of those native excellences which it may possess.

Such are the truths for the discovery or rediscovery of which we are indebted to pragmatism. The points enumerated are all concerned with the control of the present in the interests of the future, with the achievement of as yet non-existent goods, with the endeavor to make the world which lies ahead of us better than it could be without our efforts. And I find such teachings, not obstacles in my path, but guide posts which have directed me towards a sounder ethics. Moreover, if pragmatism leaves me dissatisfied and seems but a part of the truth, I must recognize that Professor Dewey has not claimed to have put forward a complete system. He has clearly said that he "intentionally put to one side the question of the nature of value,"¹ that is, he wished to isolate the question of the process by which men

¹ This JOURNAL, Vol. XV., No. 10, p. 253.

evaluate objects from that of the nature of value. None the less, there are times when at least the emphasis of Professor Dewey's writings is unacceptable; and what is somewhat true in his case, is overwhelmingly true of the bulk of his too enthusiastic followers. There is too much talk of control; too little, of the ends in behalf of which the control is to be exercised. There is too much insistence upon the importance of tools and instruments; too little, upon the purpose for which the tools are to be utilized. In other words, there is too much stress upon means; too little, upon ends. There is too much attention to instrumental goods; too little, to the more ultimate goods which are the sanction of all lesser or subordinate goods. Pragmatism is too evangelical in its harping upon a sort of eschatology. It does well to place its heaven and hell on this earth, that is, to find in the purely natural events and processes of this world the criterion of morality in the light of which the problems of life are to be solved. But like the Christians of the Apostolic Age, pragmatism gazes always towards the future; and like the Second Coming, the heaven of pragmatism never comes to pass. Pragmatism views the present as nothing in comparison with the future which we are to create; but that future never becomes present, but in turn gives place to still another future. I sympathize with the simple Christians of Thessalonica, writing to the Apostle to the Gentiles to ask why the Second Coming was so long delayed. Any system of ethics needs to recognize, at least in some point in the temporal course of human affairs, a *terminus ad quem* which, when reached, will be good and will need no justification beyond itself. Even the supernaturalistic ethics of many forms of religion has a heaven and hell which are some day to be definitely reached by the souls of men, and in which the values will be immediate and intrinsic. But the heaven and hell of pragmatism are as fleeting as time, and recede ever further from the clutches of men, so that the intrinsic values, for which we are to seek instruments and endure the present, are never reached.

Perhaps my objection to pragmatism should be expressed by saying that pragmatism is entirely too formal. I do not object to its definition of end, means, value, *etc.* But the formal theory of pragmatism ignores the fact that in actual affairs these ends and means, these intrinsic and instrumental values, are not found separately. Logically the two types of good are distinct, and can be discussed one at a time. But existentially they are not found apart. Every thing, every quality, every process, every event, is both end and means. Writers on ethical theory nearly always treat of ends and means as if they were sharply disjoined in fact as in idea. It is true, as pragmatism has shown, that everything we choose as worthy of realiza-

tion is also a cause of further effects, an agent which makes a difference in what is to come after it. This it has been the merit of pragmatism to make clear. But the reverse is also true. Every tool we use for the attainment of our purposes, every means we select to reach our ends, every instrumental good, may become an end which has intrinsic qualities, which is desirable or undesirable on its own account, which thus makes a difference apart from the future to which it serves to lead. This latter truth it has been the misfortune of pragmatism, because dealing with formal principles, to overlook. Yet more and more, as civilization advances, men have become concerned, at times meticulously so, about the way in which they move to their chosen goals. Though not, like primitive man, making a sacred ritual out of the process by which an end is sought, as if the end were unable to be otherwise obtained, men have come, as civilization advances, increasingly to value as ends in themselves those aspects of the processes of living which had previously been indifferent. The savage and the man of culture both eat food to satisfy their hunger; but the man of culture would, within limits, prefer to remain hungry rather than to devour his food in the rude ways which to the savage are normal and acceptable. These additional intrinsic goods which come to be appreciated as moral sensitivity grows are not all merely a matter of "manners" in the superficial sense of the word, that is, are not merely accepted usages which could by common consent be changed for another set of equally acceptable formalities; rather they are the stuff out of which intrinsic goods are made. Perhaps on lower moral levels, some instrumental goods are intrinsically indifferent; but on the highest level of moral growth, it is hardly hazardous to say that there are few, or none, such. Every end is a means, and every means is an end. An intrinsic good is also instrumental, unless the sequence of cause and effect is broken and time ceases to flow on its accustomed way; an instrumental good is also intrinsic, unless there is a part of life which is of no concern and ceases to be even while producing its effect.

Pragmatism is probably to be considered as the "typical" American philosophy, in that it represents in theory the practise of thousands of our citizens. Americans are characteristically eager to get results. They suffer all sorts of discomforts in the thought of future reward. The capitalist recks little of the by-products of his factory system, provided he can show a magnificent set of statistics to his stockholders. The labor-leader recks little of the by-products of his strike and the manner of its conduct, provided he can win the advantages at which he aims. The school system views the years spent in study as so much "preparation" for a career which is to begin

when the preparation is complete. And thus Americans seem crude to many of the more cultured peoples of older national groups. Americans often miss the beauty or ugliness of the processes by which future goods are sought, the qualities of living which each fleeting moment possesses, the values, good or bad, which with irremediable course come into being and then slip on into the record of the past. Other national groups may heed too little the future which they are helping to create, absorbed in the appreciation of present values, immediate and intrinsic. But Americans tend rather to heed too little the present, pursuing an ever-receding future, and blind to the moral aspect of the present. The present alone is able to give life real meaning.² Life is not all preparation, indeed preparation ceases to have meaning when the goal of preparation is lost.

It is easy to guess why pragmatism has failed to emphasize the importance of intrinsic goods. Modern science has brought forth fruits of marvellous influence upon our daily living. The extent to which in the near future still further control over nature in the interest of man may be achieved is a subject over which it is difficult not to wax eloquent. The process of control, which at first was an instrumental good, has become to this progressive age the chief of intrinsic goods. Control is itself an end. Control is desired for the sake of still more control. As gold is the coin which in all markets passes at full worth and buys most of the necessities and comforts of life when other currencies are depreciated to a vanishing point, so control offers a field of increasing range within which an endless manifold of goods becomes available to the possessor of this match-

² This statement that the present alone is able to give life real meaning is open to misconstruction and must hence be briefly defended. The same statement was made by Professor Bush in an article in this JOURNAL, Vol. XV., No. 4, pp. 88-89, and was discussed by Mr. Picard in another article in this JOURNAL, Vol. XVII., No. 1, p. 15. I do not mean, and I am sure Professor Bush did not mean, that there do not lie ahead of us in the future many intrinsic goods which will eventually be realized. What I mean is that unless these goods are realized and thus become "present," the process by which they are sought is futile and valueless. Intrinsic goods are not real except when present. If when as yet unattained they afford happy anticipations, or if when already passed by they afford happy memories, the intrinsic good which is possessed is the anticipations or the memories, not that absent good towards which the anticipations or memories are directed. To deny that the present alone gives life real meaning would be to take the vicious position which the writings of many pragmatists imply, namely, that control and the selection of means are instrumentally good apart from the possibility of intrinsic goods to which the control and selection of means are to lead. I would contend for the position that every passing moment of life has its intrinsically good or its intrinsically bad quality, often of slight significance, but yet productive, when totaled up, of all the values which life can achieve.

less coin. Within limits this idealization of the process as an end is legitimate; it is to be commended as adding one more intrinsic good to a world standing in need of many goods. But the fact that control has become an intrinsic good is overlooked by the pragmatists, who speak seldom of aught but instrumental goods. And hence the question may as significantly be asked of them to-day as of the men of apostolic times, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" We are in danger of losing our soul. We are in danger of forgetting the essential and seeking the incidental. We are in danger of forging tools which we shall not know how to use to moral purpose, tools which will be productive of disaster, tools which had better never been invented than turned to the perverted uses of war, oppression, and slavery.

In the days before 1914 it was not so evident that the incomplete emphasis of pragmatism was dangerous. We seemed to live in security. We felt that the main goods of civilized social organization were safe from disturbance. We thought we could let the intrinsic goods take care of themselves, while we turned ourselves to the pursuit of means to obtain the goods more easily, more quickly, more efficiently. The whole world was becoming infected with the American spirit of control for control's sake. But to-day we are not so sure of ourselves. We feel rather that we have tools so dangerous that they may ruin their possessors. We are not so concerned about our ability to effect the end we set before ourselves as we are with the end we may socially set about to realize. If the peace conference failed to take steps to secure certain intrinsic goods, the reason was not ignorance of how to proceed, but passionate craving for other ends inconsistent with the intrinsic goods ignored or even betrayed. Hence we need in current society, and in the philosophy which may help to direct current society, an emphasis upon intrinsic goods, an insistence upon the proper goals of human endeavor. Of course we shall also need to take account of the means by which the ends are to be brought into being; but this is both an easier and a less important aspect of our present moral problem. Pragmatism is thus not in need of refutation, but of supplementation. The part of a complete system of ethics which is most essential for the present day is omitted in most pragmatic formulations.

There is a maxim to the effect that "the end justifies the means." To this maxim many objections have recently been made, as by the "conscientious objectors" during the war; and of this maxim many defenses have been made, as by the more violent assaulters of our existing social structure. In the light of the claim of this paper that all things and all events are both ends and means, the issue becomes

clarified. We may well ask what except the end could ever possibly justify the means. But there is more to be said. In the first place, the means which may be chosen as the way of obtaining an acknowledged good is itself an end of intrinsic merit or demerit. This means may be so evil as to counterbalance the good of the end sought. If the conscientious objectors had put their case on this ground as the more intelligent of them did, the question would have been debatable and the decision could have been reached on the basis of experimental evidence, even though the issue would be a dead one before the evidence would all be in. The situation thus was one in which men had to make a "judgment of practise" and permit the future to determine the truth or falsity of their judgment by the outcome of the actions to which the judgment led. Similarly in many other problems than that of the justifiability of a resort to war to attain a desired end, the means is itself a crucial matter. Though the end justifies the means, there may be several ends in one given situation; and in that case it is begging the question to justify the means by isolating one end as alone significant. Until a means can be found which is either itself an intrinsic good or at least but slightly an intrinsic evil in comparison with the good end to be brought about, the original end is not the justification of the selected means.

In the second place, the end which is sought is itself a means to further ends of intrinsic value, good or bad. These further ends may be so evil as to make the original end undesirable, even though, isolated and regarded in itself alone, it would be highly desirable. Such is the case with many ends which men thoughtlessly seek, careless of the eventual accounting which time will force upon them. In these cases again the end, the one, original end, is not able to justify the means. Thus the common maxim, however true when extended to cover all the facts, becomes false when ends and means are separated as distinct elements in the temporal succession of events. Remote, ever remoter, results of chosen ends must with increasing intelligence figure in the evaluations made, and intrinsic aspects of incidental means will more and more become essential features of the situation which will call for immediate appreciation as good or bad. Of the interconnection of end and means pragmatism is aware; but pragmatism has emphasized the further consequences of a given end rather than the intrinsic value of the chosen means. The latter truth is, none the less, important. What we must come to take into account is just the continual stream of intrinsic goods which, even though producing results as means, at the same time stand as ultimate goods or bads in and of themselves. Indeed without such ultimate goods and bads, pragmatism would be meaningless. Without

intrinsic goods, instrumental goods are devoid of significance, like tools which, in being used, are to be used for no purpose. It is the continual stream of intrinsic goods which is the ever renewed justification, the ever-present vindication, of our efforts to guide the course of human affairs, to select suitable means to chosen ends, to enrich life through wise control over its conditions and the materials of its successful expansion.

Frequently when in the history of philosophy stress has been laid upon progress, upon the mechanism of achieving moral gains, there has succeeded an effort once more to emphasize the final and ultimate goods towards which progress should be sought, and for which the mechanism was to be used. John Stuart Mill, for example, felt the dreariness of Benthamism as a moral system, and for a time lost interest in life because he found in the Benthamism in which he had been reared no satisfying statement of intrinsic goods. Now undoubtedly Benthamism had a clear definition of an intrinsic good, namely, pleasure, which, even if but one of a multitude of intrinsic goods available to men, and not even perhaps the most important of them, would theoretically serve as the justification of the struggle for means to increase human happiness, of the effort to control the future through knowledge of the consequences of action. But the whole emphasis of Benthamism was upon control, with almost no stress upon that which made the control desirable. The means were so all-important, that the end was dropped almost out of sight. At least upon John Stuart Mill the effect of Benthamism was to make life seem cold and forbidding. For his teachers the process of gaining control had come to be the chief intrinsic good. But to him the question loomed ever larger as to what the outcome was to be of the increased control. And so he passed through a mental crisis in which he felt he had no end worth working for. In his own words, "The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for."³ And from this state of depression he escaped only when he found some things which were immediately good, which needed no further justification by processes leading on through infinite regress to a never-attained goal. He recovered interest once more in life when he could take enjoyment "in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs," above all, in beauty of human character which was of worth whether or not it had results which fitted in with the hedonistic calculus. Thus Mill stands as a warning and a type, a warning in that without full recognition of intrinsic goods the struggle for control seems devoid of function, and a type in that

³ *Autobiography*, London, 1873, p. 134.

through immediate goods needing no vindication by a criterion more remote, life becomes worth while.

In the essay in which in 1838 John Stuart Mill summed up for *The Westminster Review* the significance of Bentham, there occurs this passage: "Every human action has three aspects: its *moral* aspect, or that of its *right* and *wrong*; its *æsthetic* aspect, or that of its *beauty*; its *sympathetic* aspect, or that of its *lovableness*."⁴ The passage is confused and vague; its terms lack the sharpness necessary for ethical theory. But read in the light of John Stuart Mill's own experience of a decade earlier, its significance is clear. Mill was protesting against the Benthamite tendency to judge acts solely by their outcome, that is, as means to something else, a tendency which Mill called "one-sidedness" and regarded as an error of "almost all professed moralists." Over against this Benthamite tendency he proposed to judge actions more fully, to take into account also their intrinsic merits or demerits, their beauty and lovableness. What would the consequences of an act matter, if somewhere there did not come an intrinsic good of value in and of itself! And then if the original act possesses this intrinsic aspect as well as its instrumental function, the moral problem, though it at once becomes more complex, as complex in theory as morality always is in practise, becomes also real and vital, pregnant with human significance, and decisive for human happiness.

I have not wished in this article to attack pragmatism in any of its positive doctrines, but only to insist upon the danger of an emphasis which results in an unfortunate one-sidedness. Ethics must make central, in any systematic statement, an account of the intrinsic goods which are the core of the problem of morals. I have not attempted to enumerate these intrinsic goods, nor to define their nature, nor to determine their genesis, though recognizing that real problems must here be faced and solved. But I have simply desired to stress the need for making central in discussion to-day that which is central in theory, that upon which all else depends. Life gains its meaning and its value only because through its course men can achieve a multitude of goods which not only lead on to further consequences, but are in themselves a joy and a delight.

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⁴ *Dissertations and Discussions*, London, 1859, Vol. I., p. 387.